
ISRAEL (TIER 2)

Israel is a destination country for men and women trafficked for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Low-skilled workers from China, Romania, Jordan, Turkey, Thailand, the Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and India migrate voluntarily for contract labor in the construction, agriculture, and health care industries. Some, however, subsequently face conditions of forced labor, such as unlawful withholding of passports, restrictions on movement, non-payment of wages, threats, and physical intimidation. Many labor recruitment agencies in source countries and in Israel require workers to pay recruitment fees ranging from \$1,000-10,000 – a practice that makes workers highly vulnerable to trafficking once in Israel, and in some cases, situations of debt bondage. Israel is also a destination country for women trafficked from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Belarus, China, and possibly the Philippines for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition, NGOs note an increase in the internal trafficking of Israeli women for commercial sexual exploitation, and report new instances of trafficking of Israeli women abroad to Canada, Ireland, and England. African asylum seekers entering Israel illegally are also vulnerable to trafficking for forced labor or prostitution.

The Government of Israel does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. This year, the government increased the number of convictions for sex trafficking offenses, and conducted a campaign to prevent forced labor. Israel also continues to provide victims of sex trafficking with shelter and protection assistance. Nonetheless, though the government prepared some indictments for forced labor, it did not criminally prosecute or convict any employer or recruitment agent for labor trafficking. In addition, the government still does not provide forced labor victims with adequate protection services, such as appropriate shelter, or medical and psychological assistance.

Recommendations for Israel: Significantly increase criminal law enforcement efforts against forced labor, including prosecutions, convictions, and sentences for practices such as unlawful withholding of passports and charging fraudulent recruitment fees; significantly increase prosecutions and punishments of internal trafficking for

commercial sexual exploitation; and extend comprehensive protection services to victims of forced labor.

Prosecution

The Government of Israel made uneven progress in prosecuting and punishing trafficking offenses during the reporting period. Israel prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons through its Anti-Trafficking Law that came into force on October 29, 2006, which prescribes penalties of: up to 16 years, imprisonment for sex trafficking of an adult; up to 20 years, imprisonment for sex trafficking of a minor; up to 16 years, imprisonment for slavery; and up to 7 years, imprisonment for forced labor. These penalties are both sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those for other grave crimes, such as rape. This year, the government convicted 38 individuals for sex trafficking – four more than last year – with sentences ranging from six months to 15 years, imprisonment and fines. In addition, 16 prosecutions for sex trafficking are in process, and another 15 cases are pending appeal. Israel made some efforts to investigate and punish acts of involuntary servitude; this reporting period, the government prepared three indictments for forced labor and one indictment for slavery. In addition, three criminal cases of fraud/deceit of foreign workers involving five defendants are pending prosecution or appeal. Nonetheless, it is important for Israel to increase criminal law enforcement efforts against forced labor and unlawful acts that contribute to forced labor, such as unlawful withholding of passports and charging illegal recruitment fees. Israel reported no prosecutions, convictions, or punishments of government officials complicit in trafficking this year.

Protection

The Government of Israel continued to improve its protection of trafficking victims over the reporting period, but the protection of victims of forced labor remained relatively weak. The government operates a shelter largely for victims of sex trafficking with the support of a local NGO; this year, the shelter assisted 75 women and nine children. Notably, though Israel lacks a specific shelter for victims of labor trafficking, government authorities referred seven victims of forced labor to the shelter for sex trafficking during the reporting period. Victims in this shelter receive medical treatment, psychiatric and social services, stipends, and temporary residency and work permits. The government employs formal procedures to identify victims

of sex trafficking and refer them to the shelter; these victims are not punished for acts directly related to being trafficked. While Israel lacks a formal procedure to identify victims of labor trafficking, immigration officers interview illegal migrant workers housed in deportation facilities on a daily basis for evidence of trafficking. According to one NGO, the tribunal that reviews immigration violation cases prior to deportation often misclassifies cases of trafficking for forced labor, resulting in the detention and automatic deportation of labor trafficking victims.

Foreign workers who file complaints regarding criminal offenses are not arrested, are generally placed in alternative employment, and are granted immigration relief. Victims of trafficking received legal alternatives to their removal to countries in which they may face hardship or retribution; the government issued temporary visa extensions for 99 trafficking victims, including six victims of forced labor. The government encourages victims of sex trafficking to assist in investigations against their traffickers, but it does not actively encourage victims of forced labor to do the same. Victims not housed in the government shelter, including victims of internal trafficking, do not receive the same level of protection services from the government as victims located in shelters. Extending protection services to all victims of trafficking in Israel, including internally trafficked women, and improving identification and protection of victims of labor trafficking would enhance Israel's anti-trafficking response.

Prevention

Israel made efforts to prevent trafficking in persons during the reporting period. The Immigration Police ran a radio campaign that warned employers not to exploit migrant workers. In December, the Ministry of Education and the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women conducted awareness campaigns in the school system that included seminars for administrators and teachers on sex trafficking. This program focused on the role of the school system in reducing demand for commercial sexual services. The government has not instituted a public awareness campaign targeting citizens traveling to known child sex tourism destinations abroad. The Government of Israel has not ratified the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.